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Early Swedes in Charleston, SC*

Nils William Olsson

It is usually perceived that Swedish immigrants, when they arrived on the American shore, either stayed on the eastern seaboard or continued west. While this concept is quite valid, it is nevertheless interesting to note that not a few ventured south, stopping off at such ports as Charleston, Savannah and New Orleans. The reason for this can be traced partly to the not inconsiderable Swedish shipping which called at southern ports in the early part of the 19th century. We have an excellent source to back up this statement - Dawson and De Saussure's *Census of Charleston for 1849*. According to this study no less than 105 ships, brigs and schooners, flying the Swedish flag, called at Charleston between the years 1831 and 1848. It was a profitable trade for both countries. Swedish vessels carried iron, tar and wood products to Charleston and brought back to Sweden such exotic goods as indigo, cotton and rice. It is quite understandable that many Swedish sailors, tired and depressed after an Atlantic crossing, which could have taken up to three months, were elated to anchor in this beautiful ante-bellum southern city. The temptation was also strong to jump ship, and many did, and while most of the sailors subsequently returned to Sweden, not a few of them decided to remain in this lovely metropolis.

It is difficult to give an exact number of Swedes, who early settled in Charleston, due, partly to the disruptive forces of the Civil War, when many records were lost. Despite this fact, however, we are in the possession of some federal records, which shed some light on the subject. One such list gives us information on the number of Swedes naturalized between the years 1796 and 1843. Of the 29 Swedish aliens who became American citizens in the U.S. District Court in Charleston during this period of time and for whom the occupation is noted, no less than 16 were listed as mariners, four were grocers, two were merchants, one a storekeeper, one a tavernkeeper and one a clerk. The Federal Census of 1850 indicates that 24 Swedes were residing in Charleston in that year, of which number nine were listed as mariners. In addition there were four clerks, one cigar maker, one merchant, one shopkeeper, one fisherman, one laborer, one coach painter, one druggist, one tailor and one mechanic.¹

One of these Swedish sailors, who decided to forsake the sea to devote his life to a career of merchandising in Charleston, was Nils Fredrik Klint, born in

* This paper was presented at the annual meeting of Swedish Council of America, held in Charleston, SC 27 Feb. - 1 March 1997.

Tving Parish in the southern province of Blekinge 26 October 1772, the son of Anders Klint, a provincial sheriff (*kronolänsman*), and Johanna Margareta Lychovia.² We know that he was a resident of Charleston in 1822, according to a city directory for that year, and he claimed in a letter, which I shall refer to shortly, that he had bought an island off the coast of South Carolina, named Otter Island, where he had been living nine years before coming to Charleston, which gives us the year of 1813. He could not have arrived later than this date.

We are in the possession of this letter, dated 30 October 1835, written to Klint's brother-in-law in Blekinge, Per Abraham Wickenberg and his sister, Anna Catharina Klint, asking that a kinsman come over to America in order to take over his business.³ He states his request in these terms "I am doing well, but my old age is increasing and I have no one to assist me nor anyone whom I can trust. If anyone of our relatives, who is dependable, feels like coming over here to help me, I would be happy, because if I should die, my property would go to strangers." He goes on to mention his godson as a possible candidate, but, he, Nils Magnus Wickenberg, had died in 1833, two years earlier, and it was his brother, Fabian Reinhold Wickenberg, born in Listerby Parish, Blekinge 4 June 1813,⁴ who was chosen to go to Charleston to take over his uncle's property. He arrived in 1836, in the same year that Nils Klint wrote his last will and testament, naming Fabian as his heir. Klint lived another six years, dying in 1842, at which time Fabian became the sole owner of the merchandising establishment. Fabian Wickenberg prospered, joined with a German merchant named John Klinck, who happened to be his father-in-law, in forming a partnership, Wickenberg & Klinck, which was in time to become the pride of Charleston. In the meanwhile Fabian Wickenberg built a magnificent mansion in the city which later during the Civil War, was to become the headquarters of the Confederate General Peter Gustavus Toutant Beauregard.

In time Fabian, in turn, convinced his own nephew, Emil A. Wickenberg, to come over from Sweden and join the firm. This relationship did not last long for Emil died suddenly 28 April 1869 and Uncle Fabian, in order to honor his memory, ordered a granite obelisque in Stockholm to be imported and erected at the grave site of his nephew in Magnolia Cemetery, here in Charleston. Fabian, in turn, died New Year's Day 1875. His memory lingered long among his grand nephews in Gothenburg, who, when they were young, remembered the receipt of several sacks of South Carolina rice from time to time.⁵ Fabian Wickenberg and his wife left descendants and there are today many Wickenbergs residing all over the south as well as in other sections of our country.

But Charleston proved to be a magnet that drew to itself not only a host of Swedish sailors, but many other individuals from every walk of life. I shall name a few who have been prominent in the history of Charleston as well as in the annals of Swedish American history. Let us start at the top with some members of the Swedish aristocracy. In 1844 Peder Hjalmar Hammaršköld, a kinsman of Dag Hammaršköld and a Swedish industrialist and architect, arrived in Charleston with his very talented wife, Emelie Augusta Christina Holmberg.⁶ She was an accomplished musician, who was to capture the hearts of the citizenry of Charleston with her charm and ability as a piano and organ artist. When her husband was commissioned to be the architect of the newly planned state capitol in Columbia, SC, she followed him there, but the rigors of entertaining the state's legislators and worries concerning her husband's problems with unscrupulous state officials shortened her life and she died in Columbia 26 March 1854. Peder Hjalmar moved on to Memphis, TN, where he died seven years later.

A distant cousin of Peder Hjalmar was Carl Wilhelm Hammaršköld, a Swedish cavalry captain, who arrived in Charleston in 1849.⁷ He had a checkered past as an industrialist in Sweden, who had lost heavily in a wheat speculation deal which in turn had forced him into bankruptcy. He thereupon fled to America in order to avoid his creditors. On U.S. soil he had hoped to recoup his losses and repay his creditors by operating an iron forge on the border between North and South Carolina. For this purpose he brought over to Charleston a shipload of Swedish iron workers from the province of Dalarna, but the attempt turned out to be disastrous when the workers mutinied and left the forge in droves. Some of the Swedish labor force settled in the South and one of them, Erik Ersson, ended up as a lieutenant colonel in the 52nd North Carolina Regiment during the Civil War. Carl Wilhelm, now a defeated and embittered man, died in Spring Forge, NC 27 May 1860. His son, Carl Jacob Hammaršköld, served in the Confederate Army, reaching the rank of colonel, before resigning his commission, in order to return to Sweden with his mother and sister.

A third member of the Swedish nobility to arrive in Charleston on the eve of the Civil War was Tyko Libert Reenstierna, who as a medical student at the University of Uppsala, emigrated to America and settled in Charleston.⁸ At the beginning of the Civil War he joined the Confederate Army and served the entire war as an army physician and surgeon with the 15th South Carolina Regiment. After the war he remained in Charleston as a physician, married and raised a family.

Many other stories can be told concerning Swedes in Charleston - there was Andrew Lovegreen, a Charleston merchant, who willed his old clothes to his brother in Gothenburg and Captain Charles F. Westerlund, who attempted to run the Union blockade with his cutter named the Martin - but time does not permit. Let me in closing refer to two Swedish women authors, whose travels in South Carolina in the middle of the last century resulted in two very unusual and delightful travel accounts of Charleston and the South. One of these travel books was by Rosalie Roos, who was to become one of the leaders of the feminist movement in Sweden at the end of the 19th century. Her charming account of life on an ante-bellum plantation remains a classic and has been translated into English with the title *Travels in America 1851-1855* and published by the Swedish American Historical Society of Chicago. The second travel account is by Louise Nettelbladt of Stockholm, who in 1860 brought out a small volume recounting her six years' experience in South and North Carolina as a teacher of Swedish embroidery and fine needlecraft to the young ladies in southern towns and cities.⁹ Unfortunately this travelogue remains untranslated.

I trust I have been able to give you a few glimpses of Swedish life in South Carolina and in particular Charleston as it was in the first half of the 19th century. This year it will be fifty years ago since I first visited Charleston and spent many an evening interviewing descendants of Fabian Wickenberg and Tyko Reenstierna as well as other early settlers. Though they all had intermarried into old South Carolina families they still exhibited an inordinate pride in their Swedish heritage, despite the passing of so much time. I trust you all will find that Charleston, as it has done across the years, still has the ability to charm visitors, be they Swedish mariners, ambitious merchants, or common tourists like all of us.

¹ See Appendix.

² *Tving Parish Birth Records*, Lund District Archives.

³ The letter is in the possession of Chester Wickenberg of Elgin, IL, who kindly lent it to the author. The entire letter was translated and published by the author in *The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* (now *The Swedish American Historical Quarterly*), Vol IV. pp. 10-15.

⁴ *Listerby Parish Birth Records*, Lund District Archives.

⁵ Letter from H.Wickenberg, dated Göteborg 28 March 1952.

⁶ Gustaf Elgenstierna, *Den introducerade svenska adelns ättartavlor* (Stockholm 1925-1936), III, p. 479.

⁷ *Elgenstierna*, III, pp. 478-479; Nina Hammar skjöld, *Ätten Hammar skjöld* (Stockholm 1915), pp. 528-532.

⁸ *Elgenstierna*, VI, p. 183.

⁹ [Louise Nettelbladt], *En svenska i Amerika* by -m-n- (Stockholm 1860).

Appendix

The following list of Swedes residing in Charleston before 1851 was compiled from naturalization records in the U.S. District and the U.S. Circuit Courts in Charleston, the Federal Census of 1850, Charleston death records, probate records, cemetery records, parish registers and city directories. The list was first published by the author in *Medlemsblad 44 för Genealogiska föreningen* (Stockholm), November, 1947, pp. 19-20.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth Data</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Miscellaneous</u>
Agrell, Charles ¹⁰	ca. 1813	Merchant	Resident 1850
Anderson, A.J.	ca. 1832	-----	Died 8 Dec. 1850
Anderson, Charles	ca. 1828	Mariner	Resident 1850
Anderson, William	ca. 1831	Mariner	Died 19 Dec. 1850
Backström, Jonas	ca. 1777 in Umeå	Mariner	U.S. citizen 11 Dec. 1804
Bäck, John Mauritz	b. in Stockholm	Mariner	U.S. citizen 25 Feb. 1799
Bahr, Nicholas ¹¹	ca. 1810	-----	Resident 1850
Ballund, Alexander ¹²	31 Oct. 1783 in Göteborg	Merchant	U.S. citizen 10 April 1816
Barry/Berry, Peter	ca. 1773 in Kristianstad	-----	U.S. citizen 11 Oct. 1814
Beckman, George	ca. 1805	Mariner	Resident 1850
Benkert, W.M.	ca. 1828	Pharmacist	Resident 1850
Benson, Lawrence ¹³	7 May 1779	Merchant	Resident 1822
Bergman, Tobias	18 Sept. 1788 in Tjörn	-----	Resident 1819
Brown, Roger	ca. 1823	Merchant's clerk	Resident 1850
Brown, William	ca. 1781 in Kalmar	Merchant	Declared intent 6 Feb. 1815
Campbell, John	ca. 1822	-----	Died 1848
Cane, Alfred ¹⁴	ca. 1821	Cigar manufacturer	Resident 1850
Dunford, Jacob	ca. 1805	Fisherman	Resident 1850
Eckland, Oliver	ca. 1776 in Sundsvall	Mariner	U.S. citizen 19 Oct. 1812
Ekström, Jacob	ca. 1774	Mariner	U.S. citizen 13 Dec. 1806
Floroder, John	ca. 1792	Merchant	Resident 1850
Green, Jacob P.N.	ca. 1782 in Stockholm	Ship's carpenter	U.S. citizen 25 May 1818
Hammaršköld, C.W. ¹⁵	27 May 1807 in Misterhult	Industrialist	Decl. intent 20 June 1850
Hammaršköld, Mrs. ¹⁶	-----	Music teacher	Resident 1849
Hernholm, Anton	ca. 1821 in Göteborg	Tailor	Married Sophia Luning 1848
Horn, Gustavus	b. in Linköping	Mariner	U.S. citizen 23 Sept. 1796
Johnson, Bennett	17 Nov. 1788	Merchant	Resident 1819
Johnson, Charles	ca. 1811	Mariner	Resident 1850
Johnson, John	ca. 1810	Mariner	U.S. citizen 5 Oct. 1831
Johnson, Niels	ca. 1799 near Karlskrona	Merchant	Resident 1822
Keptenius, Gustavus	b. in Lappland	Mariner	U.S. citizen 31 Aug. 1796

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth data</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Miscellaneous</u>
Klint, Nils Fredrik ¹⁷	b. in Blekinge	Merchant	Wrote his last will 1836
Lovegreen, Andrew A. ¹⁸	14 Nov. 1797 in Göteborg	Merchant	Resident 1822
Maddock, Benjamin	b. in Göteborg	Mariner	U.S. citizen 17 Jan. 1807
Magness, Emanuel	14 Dec. 1783 in Stockholm	Merchant	Resident 1822
Moline, Daniel	ca. 1804	Coach painter	Resident 1850
Nelson, Alexander	ca. 1826	Mariner	Resident 1850
Nelson, Christopher	22 July 1776 in Karlshamn	-----	Resident 1819
Nelson, Henry	ca. 1827	Mariner	Resident 1850
Nelson, Magnus	ca. 1830	Mariner	Resident 1850
Nelson, William	ca. 1811	Tavernkeeper	U.S. citizen 15 July 1839
Ohring, Magnus ¹⁹	ca. 1781 in Kalmar	Mariner	U.S. citizen 2 July 1812
Peterson, Christian	ca. 1811	Laborer	Resident 1850
Peterson, John Edward ²⁰	ca. 1783 in Stockholm	Merchant	U.S. citizen 16 Feb. 1816
Petterson, John	ca. 1767 in Karlshamn	Mariner	U.S. citizen 8 Jan. 1816
Phillp, Matthew ²¹	ca. 1786 in Stockholm	Mariner	U.S. citizen 12 Jan. 1816
Reed, William B.	ca. 1821	Ropemaker	Resident 1850
Rose, Frederick	ca. 1806	Mariner	Resident 1850
Saunders, William	ca. 1808	Mariner	U.S. citizen 11 Oct. 1834
Segerström, John G.	ca. 1770 in Göteborg	Merchant	U.S. citizen 14 Sept. 1807
Swan, Johan	ca. 1786 in Kalmar	Mariner	U.S. citizen 22 June 1818
Thompson, William	ca. 1805	Merchant's clerk	U.S. citizen 31 Aug. 1832
Thomson, Andrew	ca. 1805	Mariner	U.S. citizen 9 Oct. 1838
Tornland, Andrew	ca. 1799	-----	U.S. citizen 11 Oct. 1834
Westburg, John	b. in Stockholm	-----	U.S. citizen 2 Jan. 1799
Westerlund, Charles F. ²²	-----	Sea captain	Buried a daughter 1847
Westman, J.	ca. 1822	Merchant's clerk	Resident 1850
Westman, William	ca. 1791 in Stockholm	Mariner	U.S. citizen 11 Dec. 1826
Wickenberg, Fabian R. ²³	4 June 1813 in Blekinge	Merchant	U.S. citizen 19 Feb. 1849
Winberg, John W. ²⁴	b. in Göteborg	Merchant	Declared intent 9 May 1849

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The following names have also been found in the various source materials. While I have discovered no proof that these persons were Swedish nationals, their names strongly suggest a Swedish tie. They are listed here in the hope that further research will prove the point.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Miscellaneous</u>
Anderson, Carl G.	-----	Declared intent 5 Nov. 1849
Bankson, Andrew ²⁵	Blacksmith	Wrote his last will 1760

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Miscellaneous</u>
Edlund, William	-----	Estate inventory held after his death
Ericson, C.	Carpenter	Resident 1849
Gronberg, Charles G.	Mariner	Estate inventory held after his death 1810
Hallonquist, D.D. ²⁶	-----	Married Marian Hatton 17 Dec. 1812
Hernander, Peter	-----	Declared intent 10 Oct. 1831
Holm, N.	Mariner	Resident 1849
Hornberg, J.T.	Merchant's clerk	Resident 1849
Jacobson, Christopher	-----	Wrote his last will 1806
Johannesson, Johannes	Mariner	Estate inventory held after his death 1815
Johnson, John	Mariner	Estate inventory held after his death 1807
Johnson, John	Mariner	Estate inventory held after his death 1819
Johnson, Oscar ²⁷	-----	Resident 1849
Kiellin, Charles	Merchant	Resident 1822
Lindergreen, Charles	-----	Resident 1849
Lindfors, C.I.	-----	Declared intent 1 Nov. 1844
Linguist, Magnus	-----	Estate inventory held after his death 1816
Linguist, Peter	-----	Estate inventory held after his death 1815
Oland, C.	-----	Declared intent 6 Aug. 1846
Peterson, John	Mariner	Estate inventory held after his death 1812
Peterson, Jonas	Mariner	Estate inventory held after his death 1830

¹⁰ Doubtless identical to Carl Christian Agrell, b. in Visby (Gotl.) 12 May 1813, s. Carl Christian Agrell, dyer (*färgare*), and Charlotta Christina Wernström. - August Kinberg, *Gotländska slägter* (Visby 1889), p. 3.

¹¹ Lars Niklas Bahr was b. in Visby (Gotl.) 1809, s. Jonas Bahr, merchant (*köpmän*), and Catharina Christina Höök. He emigr. to the U.S. and became a shipping agent in Charleston. - Kinberg, *Gotländska slägter*, p. 41.

¹² Alexander Ballum (sic!) married Margaret Hackman in Charleston 16 Feb. 1810. - "Register of the Independent Congregational (Circular) Church of Charleston, S.C. 1784-1815" in *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 50.

¹³ Lawrence Benson, 61 years old, died of palsy during the week of 24-31 Jan. 1841. - *Charleston, SC Death Records*.

¹⁴ Alfred Cane, 31 years old, died of yellow fever and was buried in Magnolia Cemetery, Charleston 20 Sept. 1852. - *Magnolia Cemetery Records*, Charleston, SC.

¹⁵ See note 7.

¹⁶ See note 6. Emilie Augusta Christina Holmberg was b. in Stockholm 6 May 1821, dau. Carl Christian Holmberg, grocer, and Johanna Aurora Emilie Lovisa Hellgren. She became an accomplished musician and artist. - Nils William Olsson & Erik Wikén, *Swedish Passenger Arrivals in the United States 1820-1850* (Stockholm 1995), p. 219.

¹⁷ See pp. 29-30.

¹⁸ Andrew Augustus Lovegreen's will was probated in Charleston 18 Aug. 1868, in which he gave his gold watch to his son, Lawrence B. Lovegreen, and all of his personal clothes to his brother, John Peter Lovegreen in Göteborg. - *Charleston County Record of Wills*, Vol. 51, p. 829.

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¹⁹ Magnus Ohring married Katherine Louisa Brown in Charleston 2 March 1806. - "Register of the Independent Congregational (Circular) Church of Charleston, S.C. 1784-1815" in *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 45.

²⁰ John Edward Peterson's will was proved in the Court House of Charleston 10 April 1818, in which he, a butcher in the village of Washington, near Charleston, left everything to his wife Margaret. After her death his Negro man, Jim, was to have his freedom and the sum of \$250.00. - *City of Charleston Court House Wills*, Vol. E, p. 711.

²¹ Mattias Philp, sea captain, was b. in Fingranström, Börstil Parish (Stock.) s. Mattias Philp, sea captain (*kofferdikapten*), and Anna Christina [Catharina?] Dahlman. - *Elgenstierna*, V, p. 704.

²² Although Charles F. Westerlund is listed in the census as a Finnish national, his grandson claimed that he was of Swedish origin. "Captain Westerlund, 40 years old, died from wounds from enemy guns, and was buried in the Magnolia Cemetery, Charleston 4 Nov. 1864." - *Magnolia Cemetery Records*, Charleston, SC; interview with George Duncan Westerlund 11 Sept. 1947.

²³ See pp. 29-30 and note 4.

²⁴ John Wilhelm Winberg, a merchant from Göteborg, was married to Julia Wiskemann from Meiningen in Saxony, Germany. - *Parish Register of the St. Matthews' Church* in Charleston, SC.

²⁵ According to his will he left everything to his brother Peter Bankson of Philadelphia. - *Charleston County Record of Wills*, Vol. 8, p. 431.

²⁶ D.D. Hallonquist was a native of London, although unmistakably the name is Swedish. Four children were born to the couple between 1815 and 1823. - "St. Helena's Parish Register, Charleston, S.C." in *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. XXIII, p. 121.

²⁷ He may be identical to Oscar Johnson who married Gabriella Strobel in Charleston 23 Dec. 1857. *Marriage Register of St. John's Lutheran Church*, Charleston, SC.

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Penelope Westerlund's Tombstone

The following illustrates the cemetery marker in the Saint John's Lutheran Cemetery in Charleston, SC, which marks the grave of Penelope Westerlund (see p. 34 and note 22).

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

of

PENELOPE

Daughter of C.F. and M.A.E. Westerlund

* 30 Dec. 1846

+ 30 April 1847

Happy Penelope, thy days are ended

All the earthly days below

Go, thy Angel guards attended

To the sight of Jesus go